

LATE AND PARTIAL THIRD BROODS OF BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT DURING 1994

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THE YEAR 1994 will be remembered for having a prolonged summer comparable to those in 1983, 1989 and 1990 and for having nearly the sunniest October on record and the warmest November since records began in 1918. As in 1983 the fruit trees flowered again in October and the first frost did not occur at Freshwater until the night of 14th December, although a local frost was recorded much earlier at Binstead on 4th and 5th October. This warm autumn and early winter caused many late appearances of butterflies and some out of season records of moths. Eighteen species of butterflies were recorded after 1st October and I shall now describe the more interesting sightings.

Just over an hour denied October from being the sunniest on record with 170 hours of sunshine at Ryde. This did not quite beat the record year of 1921 which had 171.1 hours of sunshine. However during the latter part of the month there was 4.05 inches of rain which was nearly a third more than the average rainfall of 3.19 inches for the whole month. The warmest day was 12th October with a maximum of 64.9°F and the coldest was 4th October with 52.3°F.

There were three species of butterfly out during October which I had not observed before in that month. On 4th October I saw a freshly emerged Brown Argus (*Aricia agestis* D.&S.) on Compton Down which could have been an example of a partial third brood and on the same day I observed a female Adonis Blue (*Lysandra bellargus* Rott.), which must have been a late second brood example. The third butterfly was the Small Heath which had an excellent year with abundant numbers of both broods. I saw this butterfly as late as 18th October on Compton Down. The Chalk Hill Blue (*Lysandra coridon* Poda) was seen as late as 15th October although this species is known to occur into the third week of this month in favourable years. The last third brood Small Copper (*Lycaena phlaeas* L.) was seen on 28th October on Knighton and Compton Downs and this may be compared with the very late date of one recorded at Freshwater on 6th November 1983.

November was by far the warmest month since records began on the island and it was also the dullest with only 41.4 hours of sunshine compared with the average of 71.9 hours. The mean maximum temperature was 56.8°F which was 5.8°F above the 51°F average, and the mean minimum temperature of 51°F was 9°F above the long-term average and 2.4°F above the previous highest in 1938. The highest maximum temperature of 62.2°F occurred on 2nd November just below the record 63°F recorded on 1st November 1960 and 2nd November 1969. The total rainfall of 3.06 inches was less than the long-term average of 3.67 inches.

The Clouded Yellow (*Colias croceus* Geoff.) had a very good year with the first being seen at Rockenend, Chale on 6th June. Brian Warne witnessed over one hundred of the first brood between 26th July and 2nd September near his home at Binstead, and I saw thirty-four of the second brood including two *helice* between 4th October and 1st November on Compton Down. This was the best year on the island for this butterfly since the record year of 1983 when there was also a second brood during October. The last one was seen at the Cliff Tops Hotel at Shanklin on 10th November.

The Comma (*Polygonia c-album* L.) had a good year and the last was seen as late as 15th November at Freshwater and Firestone Copse. This compares to 6th November in 1983.

The Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria* L.) had an excellent year with the first being seen as early as 26th March and the last on 17th November in the garden at Freshwater. This last date is the latest that this butterfly has been observed in mainland Britain although it was seen on 3rd December in Northern Ireland during 1983.

December was warmer, wetter and sunnier than average. Like November, it had well above average temperatures and both the mean maximum for the month of 52.1°F and the mean minimum of 43.1°F were 5°F warmer than average. The mean maximum was close to the 75-year old high of 52.7°F in December 1934, with the highest day temperature of 57.4°F on 11th December. The air temperature fell below freezing on two nights, with a low of 29.8 °F on Christmas night. With 5.3 inches of rain falling in 20 days at Ryde the month's rainfall was one-third more than the long-term average of 3.48 inches. The total sunshine of 66.1 hours was above the average of 54.6 hours for December.

There were sightings of only two butterflies during this month. The Peacock (*Inachis io* L.) was seen in early December at Ryde (actual date not known) and the last butterfly to be recorded was the Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta* L.) at Puckpool, Ryde on 16th December.

Table 1 shows a list of the latest dates of the eighteen species of butterflies observed from 1st October 1994 in chronological order.

There were several instances of out-of-season appearances of moths during this period, and on 19th October an example of *Pleuroptya ruralis* (Scop.) and the Mouse Moth (*Amphipyra tragopoginis* Cl.) were taken at my light trap at Freshwater. An example of a third brood Garden Carpet (*Xanthorhoe fluctuata* L.) was seen on the kitchen window on 25th October at Freshwater. I also took the first ever recorded specimen of the Swallow-tailed Moth (*Ourapteryx sambucaria* L.) in November on the 2nd at my light trap. This was an example of a second brood which occurs occasionally in favourable years, and was much smaller than normal with a wing expanse of 33mm, nearly half the average size. Lt Cdr J.M. Cheverton noticed a second brood specimen of the Bright-line Brown-eye (*Laconobia oleracea* L.) in his house at Shanklin on 27th November. I recorded the Double-striped Pug

Table 1. Latest butterfly sightings on the Isle of Wight in 1994.

Date	Species	Locality
October		
4th	Brimstone (<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i> L.)	Locks Green, Porchfield
	Adonis Blue (<i>Lysandra bellargus</i> Rott.)	Compton Down
	Brown Argus (<i>Aricia agestis</i> D.&S.)	Compton Down
12th	Common Blue (<i>Polyommatus icarus</i> Rott.)	West High Down
15th	Chalkhill Blue (<i>Lysandra coridon</i> Poda)	Compton Down
	Meadow Brown (<i>Maniola jurtina</i> L.)	Compton Down
16th	Large White (<i>Pieris brassicae</i> L.)	Totland Bay
18th	Small Heath (<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i> L.)	Compton Down
23rd	Small White (<i>Pieris rapae</i> L.)	Binstead
24th	Wall (<i>Lasiommata megera</i> L.)	Binstead
28th	Small Copper (<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i> L.)	Knighton & Compton Down
	Painted Lady (<i>Cynthia cardui</i> L.)	Knighton Down
November		
10th	Clouded Yellow (<i>Colias croceus</i> Geoff.)	Shanklin
15th	Comma (<i>Polygonia c-album</i> L.)	Freshwater & Firestone Cope
17th	Small Tortoiseshell (<i>Aglais urticae</i> L.)	Knighton Down
	Speckled Wood (<i>Pararge aegeria</i> L.)	Freshwater
December		
Early Dec.	Peacock (<i>Inachis io</i> L.)	Ryde
16th	Red Admiral (<i>Vanessa atalanta</i> L.)	Puckpool, Ryde

(*Gymnoscelis ruffasciata* Haw.) in my trap on 28th November which must have been an example of either a partial third or fourth brood. The first one of the year was taken on 18th March but in 1993 I took it as early as 6th February. An extremely out-of-season White Ermine (*Spilosoma lubricipeda* L.) came to Brian Warne's moth trap at Binstead on 29th November. Finally there were some December records of three of our commoner migrants taken at light at Freshwater with the Silver Y (*Autographa gamma* L.) on 2nd December; the Dark Sword Grass (*Agrotis ipsilon* Hufn.) on 12th December and a very late *Udea ferrugalis* (Hüb.) on 16th December.

So ends an extraordinary year for late appearances of butterflies and moths made even more unusual when Gladioli flowered in November, and wall-flowers and Celandines were out at Christmas in the garden at Freshwater.

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